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ABSTRACT

In a speech to a conference on education of the gifted, S. P. Marland, Jr., the Assistant Secretary of Education, expressed the unlikelihood of another Sputnik's giving similar impetus to American support of two million gifted students as support was given to science instruction through the National Defense Education Act. Urging federal, state, and local leadership, he described problems of the gifted, such as women's entry into traditional masculine fields, and identification of talent among minorities and the poor. He explained that 1974-1975 budgetary limitations precluded new federal initiatives, and stressed that more important than money was the change in federal policy from program management to idea management, encompassing efforts to stimulate creative response and to serve as a link between the problem and those who could solve it. Cited were the Emergency School Aid Act, which will give grants to urban magnet schools to identify talent through programs for the gifted and career education; and the Office of Education for the Gifted, which has given a grant to the Illinois Department of Education to develop a national/state leadership training program, and has facilitated establishment of the Exploration Scholarship Program, supported by donations, whereby gifted students accompany scientists on summer explorations. (MC)

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SEND UP MORE SPUTNIKS*

By S. P. Marland Jr.
Assistant Secretary for Education
Department of Health, Education, and Welfare

A few days ago I met in Washington with a group of Russian educators who were visiting this country to get a first-hand look at the new things we're doing in the classroom. As we parted, I felt called upon to thank those men and women, not simply to carry out the formalities of my ex officio role of host, but to express the genuine debt that I as an educator feel to Soviet Russia for orbiting the world's first artificial earth satellite in 1957.

Sputnik changed the face of education in America. It jarred us out of an unjustified complacency with the quality of our schools and destroyed -- permanently I hope --- the smug assumption of our American chauvinist superiority in technical matters, or any other qualities that prompt our complacency. That little silver globe cheerily beeped a message that is still strongly compelling 16 years later, the challenge to all mankind, and perhaps especially to Americans, to understand that no one has a lease on the future, that it will belong indeed to those who make it their own.

America, to give us our due, got the message. Part of our reaction was finally to commit the resources of the

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Federal Government to the cause of education all across the board. The National Defense Education Act of 1958 may have been narrowly conceived in that its primary purpose was to strengthen science instruction at the elementary and secondary levels. But of far greater moment was the fact that the urgency we felt enabled us to put aside our traditional fear of Federal control and turn to Washington as the last great uptapped source of help for our schools.

With this in mind, I thanked my Russian visitors and, as they departed, I added, "Please. . . send up more Sputniks."

The Soviet authorities presumably have other purposes in mind for their space program than to frighten us into beefing up our schools and colleges. Or goad us into seeking out and serving better those in whose behalf we are gathered today ---- our gifted and talented youth. And in any case I am not certain the proper motivation for helping gifted children can be supplied by a display of technical virtuosity out of the competitor's camp. NDEA was engendered in the atmosphere of crisis Sputnik provoked in America, but we are unlikely to persuade the-man-in-the-street that failure to free a poetic talent hidden in Harlem, or one possessed of social greatness, or industrial greatness, or one who will make us laugh as never before --- that failure to feed these talents will bring us instantly under the Communists' red thumb. There is simply little political persuasion in pleading for greater public help for those who seem to have so much more than the rest to begin with.

But the fact that the cause of the gifted may be difficult

to package and sell politically in no sense diminishes its validity, and in fact should heighten our sense of urgency. For it is clear that unless we who are at the leadership level of federal, state, and local government, as well as all institutions of education, take concerted action ourselves to search for and release the most able students we have and help to develop their talents. America will continue to suffer the loss of a huge proportion of its best minds. The national implications of that kind of loss make the threat of Sputnik look very minor indeed. For the individuals involved, of course, the situation is simply tragic. The unhappy fact underlying this tragedy is our admission that we can reasonably claim to be reaching systematically only 80,000 of the two million or more gifted children now in elementary and secondary school.

Improving this sorry record will mean change in the contemporary American methods of education and we should be prepared to devise such changes and to champion their adoption in the schools of this Nation. We must level that bleak old axiom that stipulates that school must always bore thr bright child while it tends to the typical --- and that situation certainly is not limited to America.

Gibbon, the English historian, called his months at Oxford the most ideal and unprofitable time of his life. Churchil said that when he was first "menaced" by education, "I did what so many oppressed people have done in similar circumstances: I

took to the woods." And to bring the record more up to date, a biographer of the eminent British art historian Kenneth Clark comments offhandedly that "For Kenneth Clark, as for other talented men, his school days were an unimportant period." Fortunately for him, and for us, Lord Clark was the scion of a family of thread manufacturers with the personal resources at his disposal that enabled him ultimately to make a major contribution to our understanding of the cultural heritage of western civilization. Gibbon and Churchill survived, too, but without credit to the system of schooling above which they rose.

These men, one may assume, and many others like them have found their schooling stultifying, boring, frustrating, unrewarding, and unworthy of their time because educators in the most part attempted to defy the immense variability of young people by conducting single standard schooling -- to treat children and young people as if they shared a uniform capacity and sequence of development, which of course they do not. Our traditional lockstep plan of uniform promotion has, in fact, produced problems at both ends. Bright children become disenchanted early on. To use an analogy of Jim Gallagher's, they are high-jumping a 6-inch bar. But slow children fall behind quickly, while the average children, and there are many answering that description, get along well.

The slow we are dealing with, labored and discouraging as the process may be. Education of the handicapped is a national priority, and so it should be. But there are few advocates for the very able. The challenge the schools face today is to continue to do their best to recognize and develop the gifted child in all his gifted ways, loosening up the routine by whatever design in order to respond to such an obvious "special" person. Most of the conventional measures, modest though they are, address the intellectually gifted child because he or she is more obvious --- and very likely more of a nuisance. But now, at long last, we are undertaking for the first time on a large scale to search for and to exploit the less obvious but no less valid giftedness, apart from the intellect alone. My guess is that such outstanding individuals as Churchill and Gibbon and Clark will make their mark ultimately whatever the nature of their school experience. But there are others who will not make it without a generous amount of help, not because they are less gifted but because their talents are less easy to recognize or because they do not fit the traditional measurements of a markedly able person. And these are the ones who primarily concern us today.

I am speaking, to begin with, of the child who is supremely gifted in a single area, perhaps mathematics, but otherwise dwarfed in both an academic and a social sense. Such a child is frequently unable to communicate with his peers or his teachers or perhaps even his parents. He could as a result not only fail to live up to his great talent, but remain utterly undeveloped

in all aspects of living. A program for the gifted at Johns Hopkins University, funded by the Spencer Foundation of Chicago, recognizes and endeavors to rescue this sort of young person. One 16-year-old who is successfully carrying a double major in math and philosophy at Johns Hopkins was by his own admission so bored in junior high school that he was close to losing interest in studies of every kind. Johns Hopkins admitted the boy to the gifted program reluctantly because of his apparent social maladjustment. But once admitted to a program matched to his ability, all traces of maladjustment disappeared.

Gifted women encounter special problems. While more girls are attending college and undertaking graduate studies, they are still penalized socially if they have interests in traditionally masculine fields. Although the gifted tend to retain their high test competence into adolescence and adulthood, girls regress toward the mean of the general college population more than boys. Five years after high school graduation, about one-fourth of the girls in the top 2.5 percent of the Project Talent ability range were secretaries or typists.

Then there are those whose intelligence is hidden, from us of the Establishment at least, by their cultural or verbal differences. These are the blacks, and the Chicanos and the Indians and the poor of all colors and ethnic origins. Uses of standardized intelligence tests continue to confound us in our search to measure culturally different children. I am

certain that there are many minority or otherwise culturally different gifted American children who are using their giftedness in a variety of antisocial activities, including lawbreaking and leadership of others in negative pursuits. One activity at the moment in the Office of Education is an effort to formulate non-standard ways to locate the gifted of the ghettoes. We are researching ways to identify gifted Chicano youth through a grant to the Southwest Regional Laboratory in Austin, Texas. And we are following with special interest the work of Paul Torrence at the University of Georgia in looking into the uses of peer nominations of the gifted-- since in many cases of unorthodox ability patterns fellow students seem more apt at picking them out than school authorities.

And there is talent --- sometimes great talent --- in those in whom we would expect it the least, the mentally retarded. For example, I have a life drawing of the two Chinese Pandas done at the National Zoo in Washington. It reflects, I am certain you would agree, unusual ability, a true artistic gift. Yet the artist, an 18-year-old black youth, is classified in the District of Columbia public schools as a TMR --- trainable mental retardate.

It is a great credit to the D.C. schools not only that the boy's artistic ability has been given the opportunity to flower in a special art class, but that he will also soon be working full-time repairing office machines. He has been given this chance for personal dignity and fulfillment through a career development program for the mentally retarded in the D.C.

schools which is partially funded, I am happy to say, with Federal dollars.

The Federal contribution here was small in financial terms but important nevertheless to the genuine success that the teachers and administrators of the D.C. school system have accomplished. And that is the formula --- little money, lots of inspiration --- that must govern the entire Federal contribution to gifted education. In all candor, the reality of the 1974 and 1975 budgets, dominated by an overarching commitment to halt inflation, shows little promise for new Federal initiatives in support of the gifted and talented or for any other new initiatives.

But there is more to this than the attempt to right a precariously unbalanced budget. Dollars are in fact really a secondary concern, and it may well be that in a relatively short time the flow of Federal funds to State and local school authorities will once again begin to increase, utimately reaching, I would hope, at least a third of the total national expenditure for elementary and secondary education. But the Administration, as you know, is determined that whatever the future level of Federal assistance, Washington's part will be to facilitate the flow of funds but definitely not to dictate the method of expenditure. That decision-making power belongs to you at the State and local level, and the President's primary emphasis in his educational policy is to reaffirm and strengthen your control.

As the power flows back to the States and to the communities,

the Federal role will complete a methamorphosis from program management, our burden at the moment, to what might be described as idea management, and our part in gifted education as it has developed over the past year is an interesting preview of our future engagement in all areas of education. The reason is simple: we've never had any real Federal money to invest in the education of the gifted; consequently, we have had no statutory programs to administer from the Washington level. Our actions have been derived from our own initiative to awaken your interest in looking for talented youngsters and giving their talent a chance to thrive. We're not involved in laying on grants to motivate inspiration in quintuplicate. But we are making a genuine and, I think, useful effort to bring this frightening fact of the neglect of the gifted to the attention of all Americans, to stimulate creative and exemplary responses throughout the country, and in general to serve as a linking mechanism nationally between the problem to be solved and those whose efforts, if systematically brought together and coordinated, can solve that problem. Our network of influence is essentially to the State departments of education.

Federal grant money available for gifted education will continue in the short term to rest in research and development rather than program support. The National Institute of Education is considering right now a number of proposals relating to the gifted for funding in Fiscal Year 1973; decisions will be made within the next two weeks. A limited amount of funding is also available through the Emergency School Aid Act. The pri-

mary purpose here, of course, is to facilitate the process of integrating racially but a strong component of the program is to strengthen urban schools in areas where integration itself is unlikely to occur as in our heavily black inner cities. Establishment of magnet schools in the city embodying the best educational techniques and practices is an attempt to release the best young inner city minds as well as attract others from the surrounding suburbs. The ESAA legislation specifically mentions the gifted. Funds for projects involving the gifted will also be awarded in connection with our drive to establish a coherent program of career education, and I would urge everyone here to investigate the possibilities this and the other programs I have mentioned present for strengthening your own activities in this area.

But to return to my thesis, we believe that the Federal contribution to gifted education will be measured less in terms of the dollars we grant than in the less specific but more effective measures to increase concern and commitment in the States and localities and in the non-government sector. In this enterprise, our Office of Education of the Gifted and Talented under Hal Lyon is proving itself an energetic if non-funded force, both inside and outside the Federal Government. The Office came into being after Congress --- driven by Senator Javits --- directed the Office of Education in 1970 to examine the state of the education of the gifted. Our report indicated that no one, Federal, State, or local, was doing much.

The Office of Gifted and Talented has moved into this vacuum with vigor and a sense of urgency, trying to get things moving without waiting for legislative changes or new appropriations. OGT is scrounging research money where it can for projects such as the one I mentioned earlier for the identification of gifted Chicano children. We have given our only major grant --- $600,000 --- to the Illinois State Department of Education for establishment of a national/State Leadership Training Institute to strengthen program leadership in all States. At the moment only 11 States have a full-time person responsible for gifted and talented education, and our study indicated that 75 percent of all the gifted children receiving special education are concentrated in these 11 States. Accomplishing at least this in all the others seems fundamental --- and yet it remains to be done in 39 States.

The full scope of the Office of the Gifted and Talented will be described to you in some detail by Dr. Lyon later on, including progress of certainly the most highly publicized program under his direction, the Exploration Scholarship Program. The names of more than 100 gifted young people were announced on May 16 at the Explorer's Club in New York City as 1973 scholarship winners. They will accompany leading scientists on explorations around the world during the summer in an exciting, once-in-a-lifetime learning opportunity. This is the second year of this program, and this year no Federal

funds are involved. The scholarships have been donated by the Robert Sterling Clark Foundation, the Explorers Club, Education Explorations International, and other organizations and agencies -- all stimulated by the Office of the Gifted and Talented.

The Explorers program heavily involves the services of the Regional Offices of HEW throughout the country. Each regional office convened a selection board composed of Chief State School Officers, university officials, and other leaders of education and exploration, selecting 15 regional finalists from 1,000 or so applicants. This pattern of regional involvement suggests the pattern of all Federal activities in gifted education, since it is only through our regional people that we can expect to strengthen State efforts in this field. One professional in each of OE's 10 regional offices has been assigned part-time responsibility for education of the gifted to serve as the nucleus of an action team made up of State specialists, consultants and specialists from the Leadership Training Institute, and volunteers. The major purpose of these action teams is to foster exchange of expertise among the States and to continue to raise the level of concern.

This conference is superb evidence of the early impact of this effort. The credit for bringing us together must go primarily, of course, to Joe Nyquist who has a strong personal commitment to education of the gifted and whose leadership in the endeavor in one of the major States of the Nation can have only the most beneficial and far-reaching effects. I would

also like to credit Roger Ming of the New York State Department of Education who has worked closely with Bob Seitzer, Commissioner of Region II, and Jane Case Williams in designing this conference.

We have every confidence that the work of these good men and women will not only result in New York establishing a program of gifted education commensurate with the stature and means of the Empire State, but that the multiplier effect this meeting of minds will trigger will spread this spirit of commitment well beyond the bounds of New York State.

For this reason I must view this meeting as potentially one of the most important I will take part in this year. The Federal Government will provide the catalyst for gifted education, but you are the decision makers and thought leaders whose personal engagement in the cause of the gifted is a necessary precondition to the degree and depth of reform that we must have if we are to find talented children as early as possible in their school careers and to provide for them specially favorable learning environments.

There are some, I suppose, who will persist in damning any special attention to the gifted as inimicable to the democratic spirit of America and inconsistent with her egalitarian ideas of education. I reject this notion out of hand, and ask that you do the same. I think it was Will Rogers who said, "Every American is just as good as the next one --- and some are a damn site better." When you encounter negativism toward the gifted among responsible educators, you might do well to remind them that good research indicates that the less

gifted the teacher or administrator, the more likely he is to resent the gifted young person. We give ardent lip service to individualizing instruction. We have come a small distance in reaching out to the uncommon child who is handicapped. It is no less a valid public policy, consistent with individualization, to reach out now to the uncommon child who is very able. I join with you, as I ask you to work for the gifted and enlist in their cause your fellow professionals in education as well as your fellow citizens wherever you may live.

The great social reform of recent years must go forward and we can by no means ignore the rightful aspirations of the poor or the black, the handicapped, the isolated or the downtrodden in any shape or form. If we wish to preserve our own freedoms, we must energetically extend the opportunity for those same freedoms to all who have been denied them.

But this noble and necessary work does not imply the raising or the lowering or the containment of all our citizens at one mean of mediocrity. Challenging the human spirit to raise itself to the maximum level of feeling, understanding, and knowing within the unique context of the individual person, is the highest calling to which we can aspire as educators.

The Rockefeller Report on Education, issued in 1958, stated the matter in words that are worth repeating on this occasion:

> "There is no more searching or difficult problem for a free people than to identify, nurture, and wisely use its own talents. Indeed, on its ability to solve this problem rests, at least in part, its fate as a free people...
>
> "But a free society nurtures the individual not alone for the contribution he may make to the social effort, but

> also and primarily for the sake of the contribution he may make to his own realization and development."

There, ladies and gentlemen, is the kernel of the teacher's creed --- and it is the fulfillment of that creed in its highest sense that has brought us together today. Let us stiffen our resolve to push ahead harder.

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